ATLS courses

Sir

I completed an Advanced Trauma and Life Support (ATLS) court in March this year. The next day I was senior house officer (SHO) on call covering general surgery for the weekend when a call was put out for the trauma team to report to the resuscitation room in the accident and emergency (A&E) department.

A helicopter had crashed and a survivor was in the resuscitation room. Following immediate intubation examination revealed that he had a superficial wound to the left upper chest and a flail segment of that same side with poor air entry. I inserted a large chest drain immediately, without radiological confirmation, and the aspiration of air and blood improved his oxygenation.

Following rapid infusion of fluid and blood as per ATLS guidelines his blood pressure rose to 110/90 ml of mercury and his heart rate was 120 beats min^{-1}. He had a fracture of the left femur and radiographs of the cervical spine, chest and pelvis revealed a fracture of the pelvis and marked shadowing in the left lung field with multiple rib fractures.

The case demonstrated clearly to me the value of the ATLS course I had just attended. In a crisis situation it gives a system of working whereby a patient can be managed quickly and in an orderly fashion. I would encourage everyone who deals with trauma to undertake this valuable course.

F. DRUMMOND
Doctors Mess,
Princess Royal Hospital,
Apley Castle,
Telford

Emergency eye care in the accident and emergency department

Sir

I read with interest the article on 'Eye irrigating lenses' (Fernandes, 1991). We have developed a polymethylmethacrylate scleral lens similar to the Morgan lens but with the modification that considerable flow is directed to the upper and lower fornices where particulate and concentrated liquid often collects. It is important to make the delivery of emergency eye care in an accident and emergency (A&E) department as effective and easy as possible. A&E departments may be keen to use either the Morgan lens or the Moorfields lens as these lenses allow easy and efficient large volume irrigation in a controlled manner. However, it is imperative that they should be aware of the limitations and specific method of use in certain circumstances.

Chemical injuries to the eyes are particularly dangerous when caused by alkaline materials such as lime and ammonia. It is common for alkaline particulate matter to embed itself in the fornices and in the subtarsal region. There is a very real risk of these particles continuing to damage the eye after irrigation has removed free